



# What is NEPA?

## The National Environmental Policy Act

**42 U.S.C. §4321-4347, effective January 1, 1970, declared a national policy that:**

- Encourages productive and enjoyable harmony between humanity and the environment;
- Promotes efforts which prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere, and stimulate the health and welfare of humanity;
- Establishes a framework for integrating environmental considerations into federal decision-making;
- Establishes a Council on Environmental Quality; and
- Promotes better decisions on major federal projects.



# Benefits of NEPA

- Documents the potential project impacts to support decisions
- Examines a range of project alternatives
- Mandates public and agency involvement
- Requires mitigation of significant adverse impacts
- Ensures a transparent, fully-disclosed process



# Misconceptions About NEPA

Misconception	Response
Takes too long	An EIS can take several years, but most delays are caused by changes in design, or funding. The process itself rarely causes delay.
A bureaucratic make-work process	NEPA promotes better, more informed decisions about projects.
A public relations scheme	Public outreach is part of NEPA, to help identify issues, suggest alternatives, and comment on the Draft EIS. NEPA does not “sell” the project to the public.
Too concerned about “bugs and bunnies”	NEPA examines potential impacts on the human, physical, and natural environment.
The decision has already been made before the process even starts	There may be an idea what the project should be; NEPA requires that all reasonable alternatives, including a No Build alternative, be considered.



# Key Process Issues in NEPA

- A Defensible Purpose and Need
- A Comprehensive Consideration of Alternatives (Including a No Build Alternative)
- Technical Adequacy of Environmental Investigations and Analyses
- Meaningful Engagement of the Public and Stakeholders
- Promoting Process Transparency and Disclosure



# Key Technical EIS Issues

- Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Air and Water Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Energy and Utilities
- Hazardous Materials
- Water Resources
- Land Use
- Population and Employment
- Environmental Justice/Title VI
- Economics
- Community Character
- Recreational Lands and Facilities
- Geology
- Visual Resources and Views
- Floodplains
- Farmlands
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Temporary Construction Impacts

*Are there other issues that we need to be aware of?*